Field Reports

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NEW SIGNS OF SASQUATCH ACTIVITY IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS OF WASHINGTON STATE

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INTRODUCTION

On the night of April 9, 1987, Washington State University anthropologist Grover Krantz received a telephone call from Paul Freeman, an active Sasquatch investigator, concerning new possible Sasquatch findings that he had discovered earlier that day. He stated that, two days earlier, he had heard a second-hand account of a family of campers that had been disturbed during the night by a series of loud screams and the snapping of branches upslope from where they were parked. They had reportedly become so unnerved that they had fled the area. This incident occurred in the Blue Mountains of Washington State, less than an hour's drive from the city of Walla Walla.

Upon hearing of this incident, Freeman stated that he had driven to the site, clambered up a 12-foot embankment, and discovered a well-worn trail that paralleled a ridge for several miles in either direction. The elevation of the trail ranged from 4,000 to 4,200 feet above sea level. He informed Krantz that, upon attaining the trail, he had immediately discovered tracks that he interpreted to have been made by a Sasquatch. The tracks were evident for nearly three quarters of a mile, and appeared to have been made by up to four individuals. Two tracks had a maximum length of 14.5 inches, as measured from the most posterior position on the heel to the most anterior

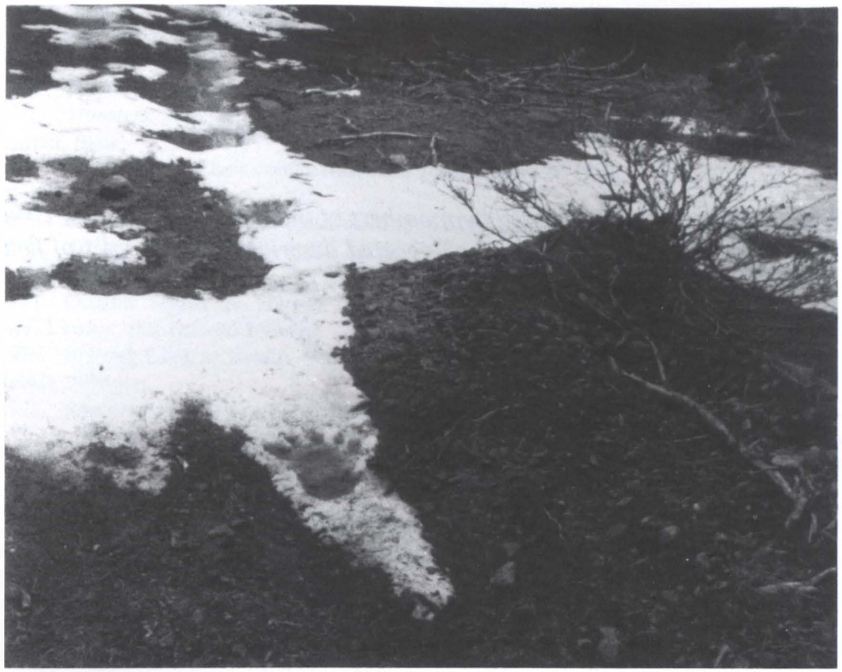

FIG. 1.—Three of the 17-inch tracks, only one clearly visible in foreground, showing splayed five digits. Heel width was 6 inches. Observed initially by Paul Freeman upon his arrival at site on April 9, 1987. (Paul Freeman.)

position of the longest digit. Another track was approximately 17 inches long (Fig. 1). A fourth track had a length of about 11 inches. Only the three larger tracks had been deposited with sufficient detail to be cast, and Freeman had made one from each of these. More interestingly, he also reported that he had discovered snapped trees, a possible "bed," and what he thought might be Sasquatch hairs.

At 12:30 p.m. on April 11, Krantz, accompanied by myself, Mark Mansperger, John Cardinal (two other graduate students from the Washington State University Anthropology Department) and Markku Niskanen (an undergraduate), joined Paul Freeman in Walla Walla. He took us to the site where he had originally discovered the tracks. While en route, he informed us that, on the preceding day, he had found more tracks nearly 5 miles farther along the trail that appeared to have been made by the individual with the 17-inch-long foot, as well as more broken trees and hair samples. He had made two more casts.

While at the original site, we were joined by another Sasquatch investigator, Greg May.

FIG. 2.—A right footprint of the 17-inch track individual. The heel is extended in this photo due to dragging. (Lonnie Somer.)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Although numerous tracks were evident at the original site, most were either partially or completely obliterated by the time of our arrival. There were three causes for their disturbance: 1) In order to obtain impressions of the tracks while they were still fresh, it was necessary for Freeman to pour plaster into the depressions. The removal of such a cast invariably destroys the original track; 2) it had snowed heavily the previous night, there had been some melting, and it was commencing to snow again upon our arrival. This caused a certain amount of fine detail to be lost; 3) Freeman was not the only person to have been informed about the plight of the campers four nights previously. Word had spread, and others had preceded us to the site, often walking along the trail indiscriminantly and superimposing their footprints upon the original tracks.

Nevertheless, we were still able to find a few nearly intact prints, mostly just off of the trail (Fig. 2). One of these was of scrape marks in the soil consisting of five digits of equal length; we initially assumed they were made by a hand. This was cast by Krantz. Subsequent examination of the resultant plaster impression revealed that it matched the digits of the 17-inch-long

FIG. 3.—Grover Krantz with snapped-off pine tree top, demonstrating how he thought this had been done. (Lonnie Somer.)

footprint cast very closely, so it was decided that the dig marks were actually made by that individual's toes. However, a very clear handprint was discovered approximately 10 feet downhill of the trail on a 30 degree slope. This was also cast by Krantz. In addition, Greg May made casts of three other tracks that were still intact enough to be recognizable.

Due to the increasingly deteriorating weather, and the time that it had taken to examine the finds and make the plaster replications, only about 200 yards of the trail were covered by our group. Within this limited area, a dozen small pine trees were located along the trail that had been snapped in half from 2 to 5 feet above the ground. Their diameters ranged from ¾ to nearly 2 inches. At least two appeared to have been twisted off. Some of the broken tops had been left hanging by their bark to the trunks (Fig. 3). Others were lying upon the ground. The needles of the broken trees were still green, and the sap was still oozing from the trunks, indicating the

freshness of the breaks. On a few of the trees, what appeared to be hair was found next to the breaks where it had gotten caught in the sticky resin.

Approximately 150 yards along the trail from where we had initially arrived, and nearly 10 feet downslope, was a slightly depressed and level area measuring 3 feet by 6 feet. Small branches containing numerous needles had been freshly broken off of a nearby pine tree, from a height of 3 feet to about 7 feet, and had been placed along the downhill edge of the depression. More presumed hair was also found throughout the depression; this matched the previously found samples in a superficial inspection of color and thickness. One could speculate that this spot was used as a nest, although this is far from certain.

More presumed hair was found about 6 feet above the ground on the trunk of a very large pine tree. Ranging from 2 to 3½ feet above this were numerous scratch marks on the side of the trunk facing the trail. They appeared to have been made by somewhat ragged fingernails, since each scratch was of unequal depth and much too wide to have been made by a claw.

A log depression was found outlined in the soil a few feet from the trail. From the appearance of the soil, the log that had formerly lain there had been recently moved. The log in question was found several feet downslope. It was 12 feet long and approximately 1 foot in diameter, with a large root cluster as its base. There were no drag marks along the ground, although an intervening log did have recent scrape marks along its surface.

Also found were areas where the earth had been scooped up, possibly to obtain the roots and bulbs of various small plants, such as blue-eyed grass and yellow buttercups. Some of these roots and bulbs were found with their underground sections removed, and only the stems and leaves lying near the disturbed soil.

RESULTS

A laboratory inspection of the casts was conducted during the week following our return. Of the three recognizably different individuals, a cast of the foot of one clearly matches impressions that had formerly been left in the same vicinity by an individual that has been dubbed "Dermals." Its maximal length is 14.5 inches, and it has a heel width of 4.5 inches. The base of the digits are sloped, with digit I being the farthest removed from the heel. Another right foot cast closely resembles another, previously known individual, who has been ignominiously named "Stud." This particular cast has an excellent series of dermal ridges across the midfoot, and some on its heel. Its dimensions almost match that of "Dermals," except that the base of its digits form a nearly straight line. The 17-inch-long casts have a heel width of 6 inches, and appear to represent an individual previously unknown

to this area. A few of the other footprint casts also display dermal ridges, although to a lesser extent and of poorer quality. The handprint cast possesses four clear fingertips, including one on which dermal ridges are evident.

The presumed hair samples that were brought back range in color from light red to grey. They vary from less than two inches to nearly a foot in length, and are extremely fine. Samples have been sent to various laboratories for microscopic and biochemical analyses. In addition, I am planning to conduct a comparative microscopic analysis using human and ape hairs. The one obvious problem with this approach is that one can demonstrate that a hair was or was not derived from a known species, but one cannot prove that it came from a Sasquatch, since there are no undoubted Sasquatch hair samples to use as controls.

As to why such an unprecedented display of possible Sasquatch behavior (the broken trees, the scratched tree) was exhibited, can only be a matter of unfounded speculation. Freeman felt that the new individual with the 17-inch track may have been following the others, but he was not certain. Perhaps the broken trees and scratch marks represent the territorial signs of a visually oriented animal trying to establish its dominance. Only additional field research on the Sasquatch question can shed light on this question.

Future Plans

We intend to continue searching, as time permits, throughout the Blue Mountains range for more Sasquatch signs, and to continue to document any new finds that we may uncover.